

III. INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION III. МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНАЯ КОММУНИКАЦИЯ

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ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE (EIL)

Abstract: The paper views EIL (English as an International Language) as a mediator of cross-cultural communication in the 21st century and emphasizes a need for introducing a new approach towards language teaching in modern methodology. The author examines the way studying English as a Foreign Language with its accentuation of the UK and the US cultures is being replaced with the concept of EIL, which highlights the role of English as a lingua franca in cross-cultural communication, recognizes the equality of the World Englishes, as well as stimulates the expression of national identity.

Key words: English as a Foreign Language; English as an International Language; World Englishes; cross-cultural communication; cross-cultural communicative competence; dialogue of cultures.

Modernity, characterized by active processes of globalization and internationalization, rapid development of information technologies and scientific progress, provides a wide range of opportunities for people and nations to participate in cross-cultural communication, leaving behind all the possible obstacles. The English language, having received a world-wide distribution, united the representatives of various language families and started to function as **a language of global communication**. The term presented refers not only to the number of its native and second language speakers, but also to its geographical coverage, and its use in international organizations and in diplomatic relations. The reasons of such an expansion of the English language as stated by Jennifer Jenkins are: (1) historical (colonial and imperial policy of Great Britain); (2) economic (the leading economic position of the United States in the world), (3) practical

(English as the language of science, the Internet, tourism, international security, etc.), (4) intellectual (English as the language of the world's cultural heritage), (5) cultural (English as the language of international pop culture and the global advertising market) [6].

According to the three circles model of Braj Kachru [7], the spread of English around the world can be illustrated by Figure 1:

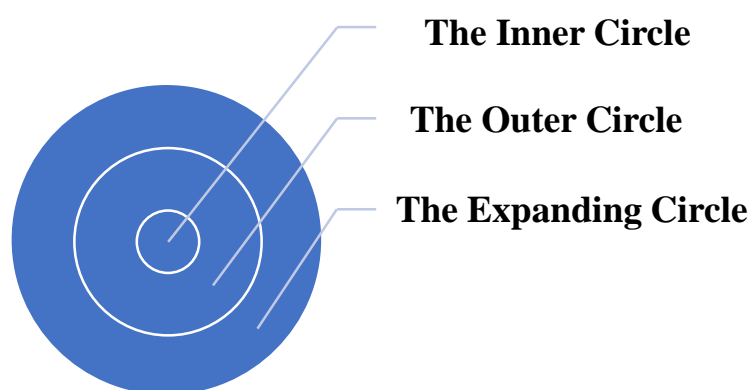


Figure 1 - Kachru's three circles model

The Inner Circle: Australia, the UK, the USA, Canada, New Zealand

The Outer Circle: Ghana, Zambia, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, South Africa, India, Pakistan, Singapore, the Philippines, etc.

The Expanding Circle: the European Union, Russia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Japan, Egypt, Israel, Iran, etc.

The Inner Circle refers to the traditional bases of English, where English is used as a first language. The Inner Circle varieties are conventionally known as «norm providing». The Outer Circle encompasses countries for which English is not native but is instrumental for historical reasons and plays a part in the nation's institutions, either as an official language or otherwise. The Outer Circle varieties are regarded as 'norm-developing'. The Expanding Circle includes territories where English is used as a foreign language. The Expanding Circle varieties are considered to be «norm dependent». The Kachru's model has got a dynamic nature: the Expanding Circle is growing annually as the number of English learners and teachers is steadily increasing; as well as the Outer Circle that is enlarging with the countries from the Expanding Circle. As Jack C. Richards, the EIL scholar, said: «English is no longer viewed as the property of the English-speaking world but as an international commodity» [7].

Evidently from the scheme, Russia currently belongs to the Expanding Circle. According to the census of 2010, 5.31% of the Russian population speaks English. The level of the speakers' proficiency takes the 38th place among 80 countries in the world as stated by an educational company English First: Russia earned 52.19 points whilst the average level of the English language world-wide is 53.18. Nevertheless, there can definitely be viewed an upward trend in English learning. For the period 2002 to 2010, the number of people who speak English grew by 618 thousand and even better results are still ahead. Taking into account all the global tendencies together with the Russian domestic education policy of introducing an obligatory State Exam for the English language, the figure is doomed to boost.

The traditional system of education in Russia teaches English as a Foreign Language, which means that teachers and students take «norm-providing» varieties (those present in the Inner Circle) and their cultures, namely the British and American ones, as their model for learning the language. As a result, the students' cultural focus gets shifted and the knowledge limited: the popular «London is the capital of Great Britain» phrase became anecdotal for a reason. The current situation does not contribute to the development of cross-cultural communicative competence, essential for cross-cultural communication, but fosters an intolerant attitude to any deviations from the norm. At the same time, statistics show that chances of having a conversation with a native speaker in today's globalized world are rather low, as 80% of people speaking English are non-natives.

The solution for ethnocentrism promotion termination in language teaching does exist and lies in the concept of teaching English not as a Foreign Language but as an International one. **EIL** studies the language as a complex mix of its varieties or so-called World Englishes (the term coined by Braj Kachru [7]). The basic attributes of EIL include: (1) descriptiveness – EIL does not prescribe how to use the language, but describes the way it functions as an international tool, mediator; (2) reformation – EIL appeared as a reaction to the drawbacks of the previous approaches; (3) unpredictability – in regard to its interactors who can be either native speakers, or not; (4) intervariability – EIL is an intervarectal way of communication due to the number of the English varieties; (5) functionality – EIL refers to functions of English not to its form and cannot be limited to a certain range of phrases and patterns; (6) naturalness

– EIL is the first non-artificial international language; (7) cross-culturalism – EIL recognizes the diversity in the learners' cultural background and the forms of English around the world; (8) multiculturalism – EIL possesses a multicultural perspective in international conditions; (9) universality – EIL does not belong to any country or nation; (10) interculturalism – EIL is not bound to any specific culture or political system [11].

Taking all the factors mentioned above into consideration, it can be clearly seen that the relevance of making a step towards EIL is based on the need of developing tolerance and empathy in modern day students, as well as bringing up their sense of national, cultural and linguistic affiliation. By learning English as a means of cross-cultural communication or its mediator in all its richness and diversity, students prepare themselves for participating in a successful and productive dialogue of cultures. Thus, EFL, not being able to respond to the 21st century needs should give its way to EIL that stands for all the crucial postulates of the present-day world.

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АНГЛИЙСКИЙ КАК ЯЗЫК МЕЖДУНАРОДНОГО ОБЩЕНИЯ (EIL): МЕДИАТОР МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНОЙ КОММУНИКАЦИИ 21 ВЕКА

Аннотация: статья посвящена рассмотрению нового подхода к обучению английскому языку – EIL (English as an International Language) – как медиатору межкультурной коммуникации 21 века. Автор исследует переход от акцентуации культуры Великобритании и США в рамках преподавания английского как иностранного к концепции английского как международного, служащего лингва франка в диалоге культур, признающего равноправие языковых вариантов, а также стимулирующего выражение национальной идентичности коммуникантов.

Ключевые слова: английский язык как иностранный; английский как язык международного общения; варианты английского языка; межкультурная коммуникация; межкультурная коммуникативная компетенция; диалог культур.

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